



DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Employee orientation Web site available at DHS-Net

From Janet Waterstradt

DHS Office of Professional Development, Lansing

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The Office of Professional Development (OPD) recently released an online employee orientation. The orientation is primarily designed for new DHS employees but seasoned DHS employees may find it interesting too.

You can find the online orientation on the DHS-Net under "Employee Information" and "Employee Orientation" or on the OPD site under "Department Web Sites". The orientation site (shown below) provides:

- Photos and biographies of DHS top leaders.

- Information about DHS programs and services and audio recordings of workers talking about rewarding experiences they have had.

- Information about pay and benefits, training opportunities, performance management, labor unions, and employee recognition programs.

- Vision and values training.

- Interesting historical information and photos.

- Checklists for supervisors to use to help welcome new employees to the department.

Department of Human Services
Employee Orientation

Welcome | Vision and Values | Programs and Services | Employee Support | History | For Supervisors

Welcome

Who the Site is For

This site was designed for new DHS employees, but all DHS employees may find the site useful and informative.

Supervisors may also find the site useful. In the "For Supervisors" section, you will find tips and checklists that will help you give new employees a great start in our department.

What You Will Learn

You will learn about our leaders, the department's plans for the future, our vision and values, the services and programs we provide to our clients, programs that support our employees, historical information, and more.

Time Needed to View the Site

If you simply page through the site to get a general overview, it will take you an hour or two to view the site. However, many pages in this site have an icon that looks like this:

Learn More

Clicking the icon will open another browser window and direct you to places where you can learn about a topic in more detail. In this way, you could spend an entire day or more exploring and learning about the department.

Requirements for New Employees

All new employees must complete the [Vision and Values](#) portion of the site.

New employees should also complete Part 1 of the QuickKnowledge course, "[Discriminatory Harassment: Promoting a Respectful Workplace For Employees](#)." New managers and supervisors should complete Part of the course too.

About the "Meet Our Staff" Movies

Throughout the site, you will have the opportunity to meet some of our employees and hear about experiences they have had with our clients. To hear the audio, click the play arrow (second button from the left) located underneath the photo of the employee. If you do not have headphones or speakers, click on the "transcript" button, and you will be able to read the contents of the movie.

Comments and Suggestions

We hope you enjoy the site and find a lot of information that will help you as you start your career at MDHS. If you have [comments and suggestions](#), we would like to hear from you.

How to Navigate The Site

Use the orange buttons at the top of your screen to move between sections.

Explore topics within a section using the blue buttons on the left.

Use the next and back buttons to move between pages within a section.

Next

Click to read...

Local office stories...2-3

Your letters.....4



Send newsletter stories to

DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

Traverse City employee finishes first in age group

From Tony Ryan, Prevention Specialist

Grand Traverse-Leelanau County DHS, Traverse City

RyanT2@michigan.gov

Colleen Ryan, a family independence manager at Grand Traverse-Leelanau County DHS in Traverse City, recently – and very successfully – competed in the North American Vasa 12K cross-country ski race Feb. 11. She won her division, placed second among all adult women racers, and finished tenth among all adult male racers.

Colleen (shown on the trail below) is an avid outdoorswoman who kayaks (she personally put the “yak” in kayak) and has run several marathons (though she cannot compete with her husband’s couch-sitting marathon sessions). Way to go Colleen! We’re proud of you.

■ For more information on the event go to www.vasa.org/race.php



'Tis better to give than receive

Youngsters at state facility learn important life lessons at Christmas

From Pam Cuthbert

Shawono Treatment Center, Grayling

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The Shawono Treatment Center – a juvenile justice facility under DHS management located in Grayling – is home to 30 juvenile males committed to department care. For the past 10 years the young men of Shawono Treatment Center have held a holiday bake sale in December to benefit needy families and nonprofit agencies in Crawford County.

For three days in mid-December these young men, with the assistance of very dedicated staff and teachers, baked cookies, fudge, candies, and Rice Crispy treats for the sale. Finally the day came and selected youth (accompanied by staff) set up the tables, chairs and baked goods outside Glen’s Market in Grayling (with the store’s permission, of course).

Within minutes shoppers begin crowding about the tables, asking who is sponsoring this event, what the proceeds are used for, and the price of the baked goods. While nervous at first, the youths soon relaxed and eagerly began to answer questions and encouraged customers to buy their products. The baked goods are not priced and patrons are simply asked to make a donation.

Time flew by, goodies were disappearing quickly, and soon everything was gone! The youths and staff members packed up the tables and chairs, thanked the management of Glen’s, and returned to Shawono to see how much their effort had raised. Much to the delight and cheers of youths and staff they raised more than \$800 at the sale. “Unbelievable! This is going to make for a great



Christmas for one family and for River House,” said Diane Linskey of Shawono Center. River House is the domestic violence ‘safe’ house adopted by Shawono Center as the community agency recipient.

Just before Christmas, Shawono staff delivered holiday gas cards to River House and three Shawono youths and staff accompanied the parents of the chosen family to Kmart to buy gifts for their five children. For these young men shopping was a very moving experience. One youth repeatedly asked his group leader: “Are people always this nice and do they always care about others? It wasn’t like this for me and I usually only cared about myself.”

Following the shopping trip, the gifts and food gift card were brought back to Shawono Center where all youths participated in wrapping and preparing for pick up on Christmas eve. The spirit of giving spread throughout Shawono and soon staff started bringing in gifts for the family. Holiday excitement continued to build and finally the day arrived when the parents came to pick up the gifts. The family also knew the spirit of giving and brought cookies and candy for the staff and youths, telling all, “This isn’t much, but we wanted you to know how we appreciate what you’ve done for us.”

For many of these young men this was their first opportunity to practice the principles of balanced and restorative justice – to give something positive back to the community. When asked to describe how this experience made them feel, the youngsters’ comments ranged from:

- “Although we may not have received a lot of gifts this Christmas, participating in this project helped us gain confidence, self-esteem and we gained respect from the community.”
- “At first I was shy, but after 5-10 people bought cookies, it got easier. I felt confident and I really felt good about what it was I was doing.”
- “I actually was doing something positive and that made me feel good.”
- “It felt good to work with my group members to help others less fortunate.”
- “It felt good to volunteer, to give up some of my time, to help others in the community.”
- “We should think of other projects we could do to help people like raking leaves, shoveling and shopping for senior citizens; or maybe preparing a feast for others, like senior citizens.”
- “Shopping for those kids was the greatest! I never had a Christmas like this and it was great to be able to help some little kids have a good one.”

Volunteering and participating in community projects is not new for residents of Shawono Center. They have a tradition of working with the community on the Grayling Red Cross Blood Drive, Adopt a Highway, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ water quality testing. The one project that is the most rewarding, however, is the annual holiday bake sale.

Some people think juvenile delinquents should be locked up with the key thrown away. Many times, our youths feel disenfranchised with little hope for a happy life. But then, for a brief moment in December, the people of Grayling and the youths of Shawono Center come together to make a positive difference. They were giving hope that attitudes and perceptions will be changed. We are already planning for next year!

■ For more information on Shawono Center go to www.michigan.gov/dhs and click on "Juvenile Justice" and "Facilities".

Kalamazoo says thanks to staff for good work

From Beverly Barrone, Program Manager
Kalamazoo County DHS, Kalamazoo
BarroneB@michigan.gov

Kalamazoo County family independence managers and administrative support supervisors provided payments and administrative support staff with a breakfast celebration Jan. 24 where they issued certificates of merit in recognition of their outstanding performance in reducing our county’s Food Assistance Program error rate.

Based on local office calculations the 2005 Fiscal Year error rate was just 2.97 percent. This is exceptional considering the increased caseloads due to reduced staff. The management staff in Kalamazoo County wishes to publicly commend our FIS, ES and administrative support staff for the excellent job they have done in reducing the FAP error rate and for their tireless efforts to provide quality service to our clients.



Date: Jan. 26
To: DHS Matters!
Subj: Vickie Banks

So often in the day to day life, we don't hear about what is being done right by employees. I wanted to tell you how lucky you are to have Vickie Banks employed in your Calhoun County office. I've never seen a more caring, efficient, helpful assistance payment worker.

She treats emergencies like emergencies and helps those less capable get the paperwork she needs together to help them as soon as possible. She looks out for kids, especially special needs kids and the needy families by getting them food, shelter and housing assistance so they don't end up in a shelter. This kind of efficiency goes a long way in helping to ease disruption brought on by an emergency and helps families get back on their feet quickly.

Thank you again for having such a wonderful worker available in our local office. I count it a blessing every time one of my clients is lucky enough to pull her name. I know they are in good hands and help will come quickly. Now if you could just clone her I'd be elated.

Cathleen A. Halash

Battle Creek

■ *Vickie Banks is a family independence specialist in Calhoun County.*

Date: Jan. 21
To: DHS Matters!
Subj: Gratiot County staff and volunteers

I am writing regards to (the Gratiot County) transportation (staff). I speak not only for myself but for all of those who use the transportation help that is given (and) for those who are babies and people of all ages. I would like to thank **Dan Carley** for his great expertise in hiring drivers and for being a very caring and compassionate person. He has always gotten rides for me with the people I request and if that person was unable to assist me he always sends a very caring person to take me to my appointments.

Veda Hartzell is one driver who has been a very special friend to me in taking me to appointments, very caring and again compassionate. Arnold Thompson is also very caring. On one trip my sugar level dropped very low; I was very (ill) and could have easily dropped into a coma. With his compassion he helped me by stopping at McDonald's so I could get food to bring my sugar level back up out of the danger zone. Little did he know he probably saved my life that day.

There are many other wonderful drivers that have assisted me. I would like to thank them, somehow and in some way, each and every driver. Dan Carley deserves special recognition for their beyond duty care. Thank you so very much.

I also thank my caseworker **Lori Eichorn** for her part in helping with my transportation needs. She is also very caring and always available when I need her. Thank you to every one of you for your caring ways and compassionate hearts.

Gay Lynne Hudson

Alma

■ *Dan Carley is community resource coordinator for Gratiot County DHS and Lori Eichorn is family independence specialist at Gratiot County. Veda Hartzell and Arnold Thompson are volunteers.*

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise



Make Tax Time Pay—for You! Claim All Your Tax Credits

You could be eligible!

Did you work in 2005? You may be eligible for the Earned Income Credit. If so, you'll owe less in taxes and you could get cash back. Even if you don't owe income tax, you can get the EIC!

- Were you raising one child in your home in 2005? Did your family earn less than \$31,030*? You can get an EIC up to **\$2,662**.
- Were you raising more than one child in your home in 2005? Did your family earn less than \$35,263*? You can get an EIC up to **\$4,400**.
- If you weren't raising a child, did you earn less than \$11,750* in 2005? Were you between the ages 25 and 64? You can get an EIC up to **\$399**.

*If you are married, the income limit is \$2,000 higher than this amount. Many married workers will get a larger EIC.

Here's how you get it:

- If you were raising children in 2005, file federal tax return Forms 1040 or 1040A, *not* Form 1040EZ. Be sure to attach Schedule EIC.
- If you weren't raising children in 2005, just file any federal tax return.

Boost your take-home pay! Eligible workers with children can get Advance EIC in their paycheck. Get Form W-5 from your employer, or call 1-800-TAX-FORM.

Tax time can pay even more — claim your CTC refund!

Many families that earned more than \$11,000 may qualify for the Child Tax Credit (CTC) refund — up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under age 17. See tax form instructions and get Form 8812.

Want more information? Want to find out how you can get your tax forms filled out for free? Call the IRS toll-free at 1-800-829-1040.

DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
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Larry VanDeSande, editor • Submit stories by e-mail to: DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov